

Overhaul in the works

Intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capability gets facelift

Providing fighting forces the most accurate intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance information is nothing new to the military.

In the late 1700s, the French used hot air balloons to gather military information as they fought their revolution. The Union Army used balloons during the Civil War. And the first spindly aircraft over the World War I battlefield flew observation missions.

That makes the intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance one of the oldest missions in the military. On today's battlefield, nothing is more important. It is just as important in peacekeeping, counterterrorism and counterdrug operations and disaster and humanitarian relief.

The Air Force's ISR role is ever increasing and the service's top intelligence officer said the Air Force needs to overhaul the way it does that mission.

Lt. Gen. David A. Deptula, the deputy chief of staff for intelligence, wants to effect changes that will make the Air Force's ISR capabilities the best available. He also wants to provide intelligence officers more leadership potential.

"I want to manage ISR from a capabilities-based perspective," he said. "Organizationally, I want to treat Air Force intelligence as an Air Force-wide enterprise. And personnel-wise, we need to reconstruct our bench of Air Force senior intelligence officers so we can viably compete for joint and interagency positions."

When he took the intelligence helm, the general asked for a diagram of how the service's ISR organization interacted. He found convoluted relationships. He said the complexity of the organization left seams in ISR capability, unclear lines of responsibility and a lack of a clear advocate for Air Force ISR capability.

"The way we do business today is that we define ISR capability by

individual program elements. The net result is a tendency to drive a disjointed approach to ISR. We have the potential for the left hand not knowing what the right hand is doing, and in fact, that has happened," he said.

For example, the Air Force was upgrading software for the Distributed Common Ground System, a global processing system that provides analysis and distribution of intelligence data from anywhere on the planet. The software ended up being incompatible with the new sensors aboard U-2 and Global Hawk aircraft. The incompatibility was unexpected, and it may now take as many as 20 months and \$17 million to fix the problem.

To prevent those kinds of mistakes in the future, General Deptula is creating a position to integrate ISR assets and manage them as capability areas.

"It is too big a bridge to cross to try to change the way [the Office of the Secretary of Defense] manages by program element," the general said. "But I am going to put in place an ISR capability integrator, not dissimilar to a program manager, for each set of ISR capabilities."

by Staff Sgt. Suzanne M. Jenkins



by Staff Sgt. Brian Ferguson



An MQ-1 Predator unmanned aerial vehicle (top) lands at Ali Air Base, Iraq, after a mission. Predators provide real-time surveillance imagery. Capt. Mike Shields (above) inspects his F-15E Strike Eagle before a mission over Iraq. The jet carries a Sniper Pod, used for conducting non-traditional intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance.

General Deptula plans to group the command structure for all Air Force intelligence agencies.

"I want to align Air Force intelligence so there are coherent lines of responsibility and authority for the intelligence function, and make sure that it is treated as an Air Force-wide enterprise," he said.

That means making some key moves. The Air Force Intelligence Agency at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, and its subordinate units -- with the exception of the Air Force Information Operations Center -- will move from under Air Combat Command to become a field operating agency for the deputy chief of staff for intelligence.

The agency will be renamed Air Force ISR Command. The transformation was set to take place March 1, the general said.

The Air Force Information Operations Center, also at Lackland, will remain with Air Combat Command as part of the 8th Air Force Cyber Command at Barksdale AFB, La.

The move is significant, with a switch in chains of command. But its people will remain in place,

the general said. The changes will streamline the presentation of Air Force ISR capabilities for national and joint users, as well as establish intelligence as an Air Force-wide enterprise.

The general also said that today, the Air Force is not adequately represented in senior ISR positions in joint, national or combatant commander billets. In fact, an Airman has not

held a component command intelligence post in more than five years.

"(This) is not good for the joint or national community," he said. "Our combatant commanders need to be served by an air perspective."

General Deptula has also asked Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. T. Michael Moseley to expand the number of Air Force intelligence general officer billets. General Deptula plans to ensure those officers get the training needed for them to be candidates for future joint and national senior intelligence positions.

by Staff Sgt. C. Todd Lopez